



# FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSES

Colin L. Drabert, Deputy Director

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# Study Authorization

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- Legislation to enact a firearm purchaser license (FPL) law in Virginia was referred to the Crime Commission:
  - HB 1424 (2024) (Del. Hope); and
  - SB 1109 (2025) (Sen. Carroll Foy).
- The bills require Virginia State Police to administer an FPL and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to certify instructors for a firearm safety course.



# What is a Firearm Purchaser License?

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- A license issued by a government agency that a person must obtain before purchasing a firearm.
- FPL components vary widely across states.
- An FPL can be used in conjunction with, or can replace, a background check at the point of sale.



# What is the Purpose of an FPL?

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- The goal of an FPL is to reduce firearm use in homicides, suicides, and other shootings by:
  - Enhancing the current background check process; and,
  - Requiring instruction on safe firearm use and storage.
- Concerns have been raised that an FPL burdens lawful firearm purchasers and infringes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment.



# Key Findings

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- 14 states and D.C. have an FPL law.
- Enacting an FPL law involves considerations of license components, equitable impacts, and resource needs.
- FPL laws have withstood 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment challenges.

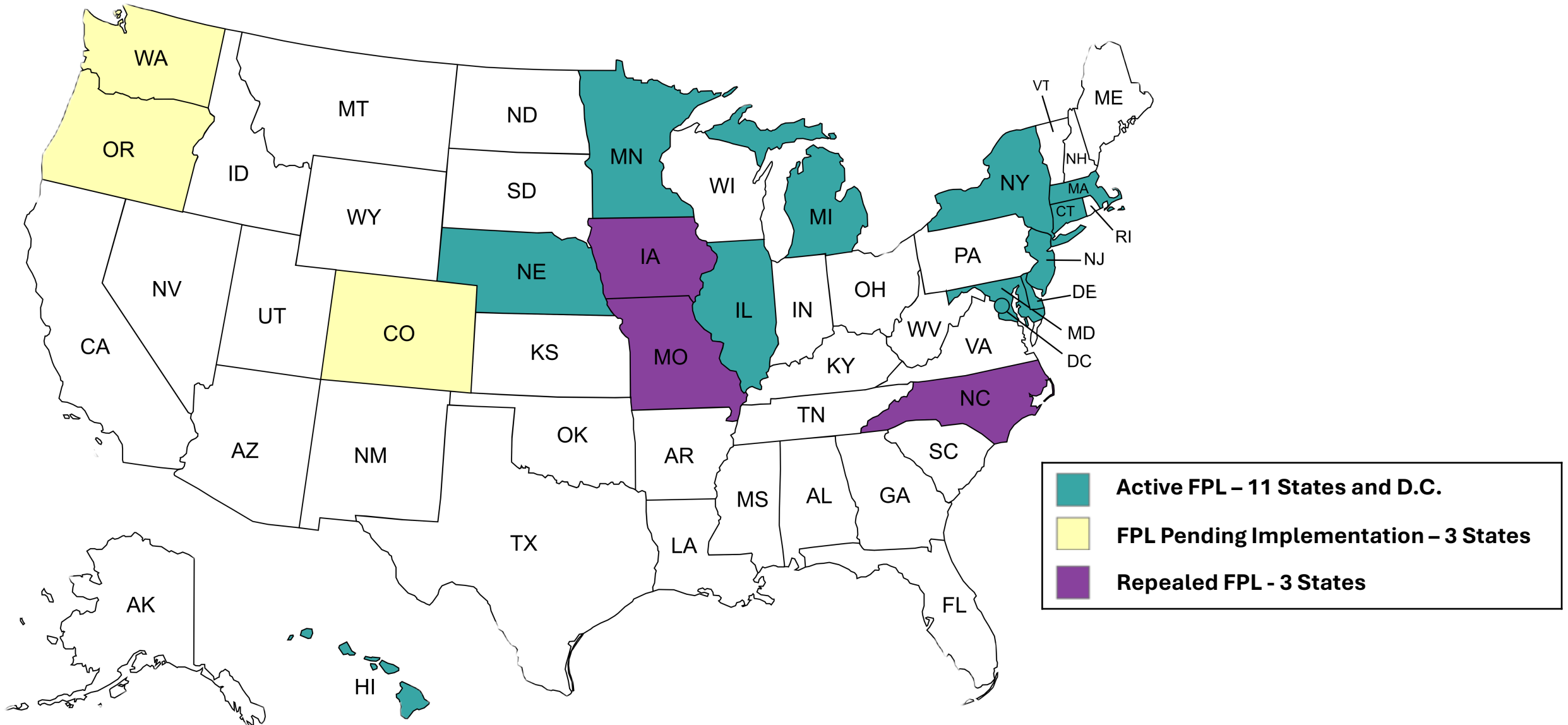


# Key Findings

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- Research suggests that FPL laws, in conjunction with other firearm laws, may reduce firearm trafficking.
- Research findings on the impact of FPL laws on homicides and suicides is mixed.
- Enacting an FPL law, or components of an FPL law, is ultimately a policy decision.

# 14 States and D.C. Have an FPL Law





## 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment

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- FPL laws have withstood 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment challenges.
- The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which includes Virginia, recently upheld Maryland's FPL law against a 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment challenge.
  - *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc. v. Moore*, 116 F.4th 211 (2024).
  - U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari in January 2025.

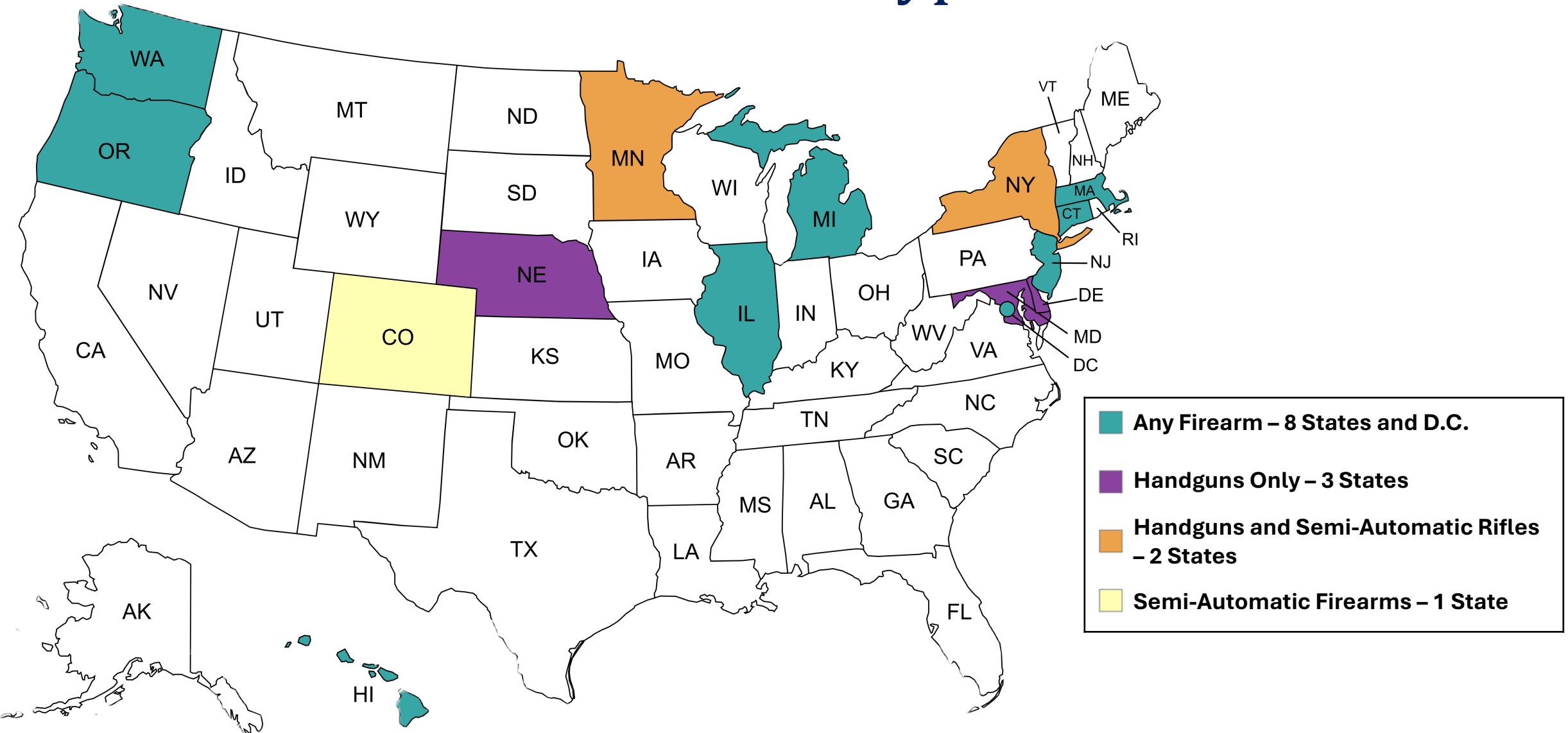


# FPL Components Vary Across States

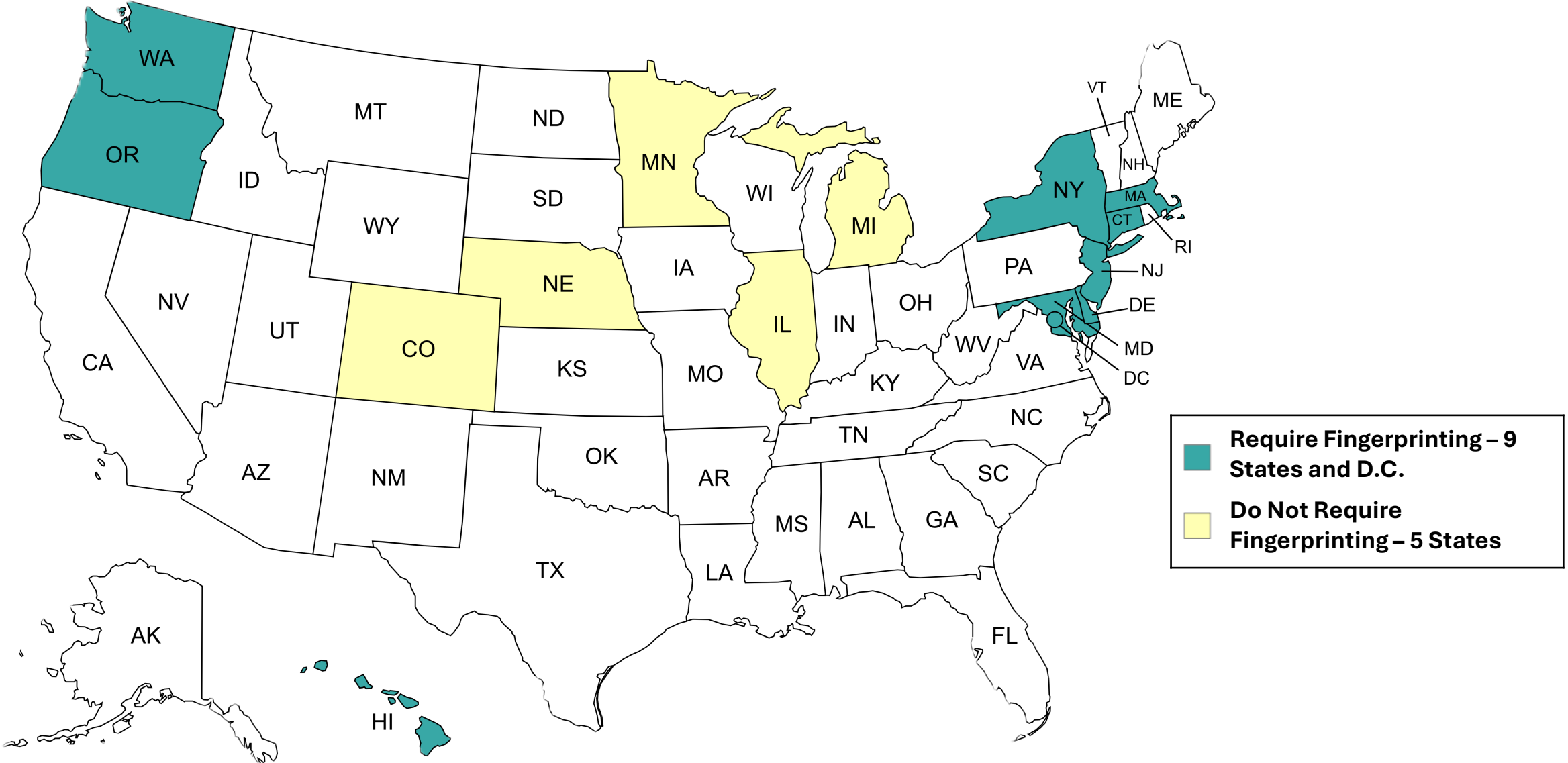
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- Firearm Type
- Issuing Agency
- Application Process
- Application Fee
- Fingerprinting
- Photograph
- In-Person Requirement
- Firearm Safety Course
- Live Fire Requirement
- Time to Issue or Deny License
- Risk-Based Denial
- Duration of Permit
- Appeal Process after Denial or Revocation of a License
- Continuous Monitoring
- Renewal Process
- Removal of Firearms after Revocation of a License

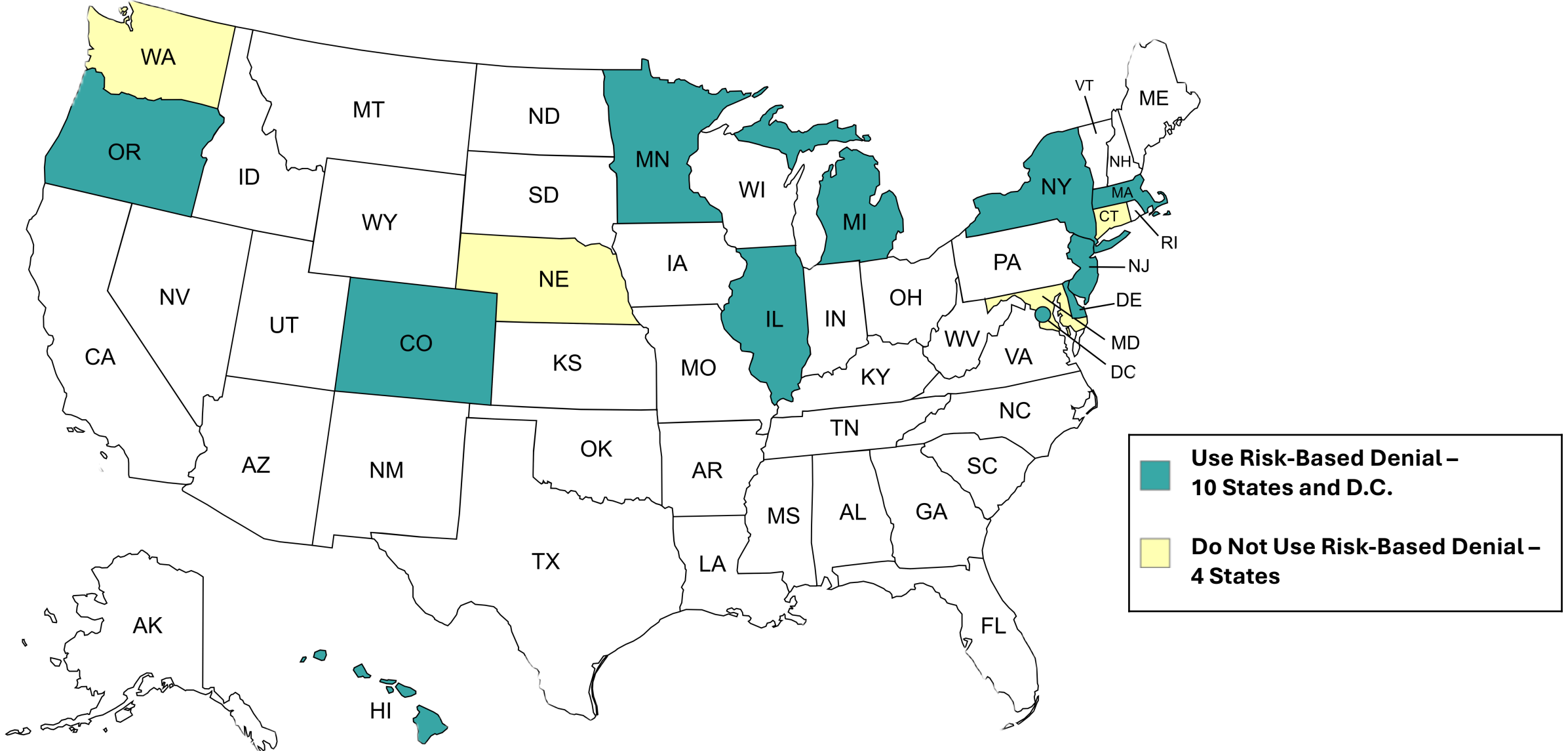
# Firearm Type



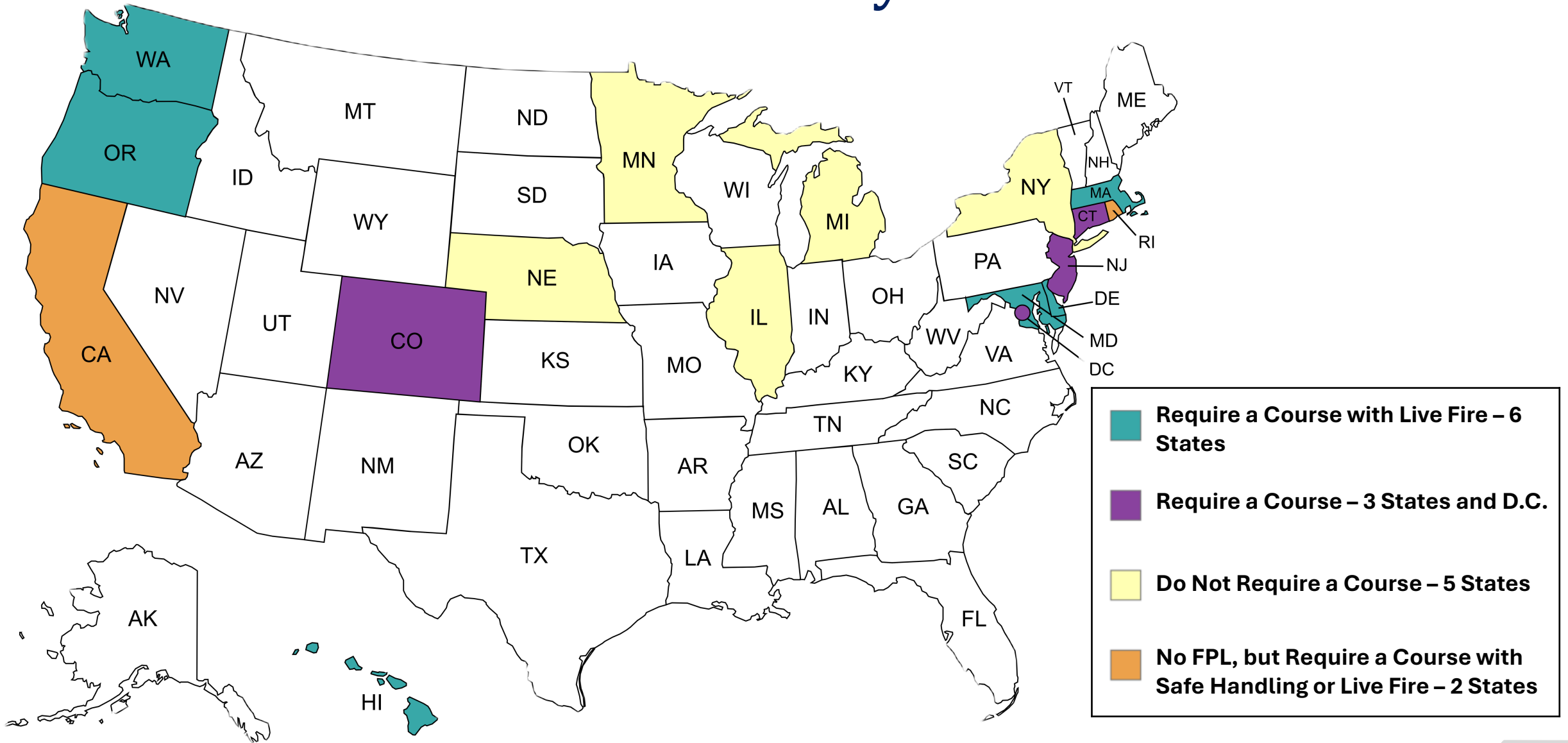
# Fingerprinting



# Risk-Based Denial



# Firearm Safety Course





# Equitable Impacts

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- Fees to obtain an FPL (e.g., application, fingerprinting, firearm safety course, use of a shooting range).
- Access to the internet across the Commonwealth.
- May require in-person interaction with law enforcement.
- Subjectivity of risk-based denial.



# Resource Needs

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- Enacting an FPL law requires resources for:
  - Staffing (including office space and equipment);
  - Developing an application process;
  - Upgrading technology for issuing and continuously monitoring licenses;
  - Creating and updating a firearm safety course, along with certifying instructors; and,
  - Litigating license denials and revocations.



# Research Findings

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- Data on the number and rate of firearm homicides and suicides varies widely across states with FPL laws.
- Research has consistently cited the difficulty in isolating the precise impact of any single law on firearm violence, including FPL laws.
- Research suggests that FPL laws, in conjunction with other firearm laws, may reduce firearm trafficking.



# Research Findings

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- Research findings on the impact of FPL laws on homicides and suicides are mixed.
  - Some research found reductions in homicides and suicides.
  - Other research findings were inconclusive.
- Common limitations in this body of research relate to:
  - Methodology;
  - Limited sample sizes and time frames;
  - Exclusion of states with recently implemented FPL laws; and,
  - Not accounting for other laws in place before, after, and coinciding with an FPL law.



# Summary

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- Enacting an FPL law, or components of an FPL law, is ultimately a policy decision.
- Virginia could enact an FPL law.
  - 14 states and D.C. have an FPL law.
  - FPL laws have withstood constitutional challenges.
  - Would require a delayed enactment and resources.



# Summary

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- Virginia could enact components of an FPL to reduce administrative duties and resource needs, such as:
  - Completing a firearm safety course prior to purchase;
  - Adding a waiting period after a firearm purchase;
  - Requiring fingerprints as part of a background check; or,
  - Aligning state prohibitors with federal prohibitors.



# DISCUSSION